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THE HOWARD HOUSTON HALL, UNIVERSITY  
OF PENNSYLVANIA.

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Ten years ago a club house open to all students as part of the equipment of a great university did not exist. If such a building had been thought of its value as an educational factor was not sufficiently apparent to warrant the necessary outlay.

Before the year 1894 the University of Pennsylvania, as was the case with most institutions of its class, had made practically no provision for student life outside the class-rooms. A student was expected to attend at lectures at the hours prescribed, and when these duties were fulfilled he had to go elsewhere. There were, it is true, a number of student organizations in the various departments, a few having their headquarters in the university buildings. The membership in such organizations was generally confined to one subdivision of the University. As there was no general meeting-place, and but little of interest, beyond athletic contests, to bring the students of various departments together, the student body had little in common. Those who were away from home lived at one of the numerous boarding-houses near the University, under all the disadvantages that such an existence entailed.

Among the student organizations was a branch of

the Young Men's Christian Association, the membership of which was made up largely of college men. To extend its influence it seemed desirable that there should be a house exclusively devoted to its purposes, and a committee was appointed to raise funds for the erection of such a building. This project enlisted the hearty co-operation of Provost Harrison, and on his laying before Mr. Henry H. Houston, one of the University trustees, the great need of a building in which a student could pass his leisure hours the gift of a hall was made. The name of the "Howard Houston Hall" was determined upon by the trustees, in commemoration of the son of the donor, who was a graduate of the civil engineering course in the College in the class of 1878.

The site selected for the Hall is almost an ideal one, as it is practically in the center of the working buildings of the University. Within a hundred feet of it, on the various sides, are the College, Medical Lecture Hall, Medical Laboratory, the Mechanical Building, and the University Hospital, while the Library, Chemical, Hygiene and Dental Buildings are but little farther away.

The plans adopted for the building were selected after competition, and were those prepared by two young graduates of the University, who were in hearty sympathy with the undertaking. In the execution of the work, these young men were associated with a well-known firm of architects, the result being a very satisfactory one.

The building was completed and opened on January 2, 1896, and since that time every student may

comfortably spend his leisure time on the University grounds.

The building covers a rectangle 150 by 80 feet and has three floors and basement, the high peaked roof starting at the ceiling of the second floor lending itself to excellent architectural effect in the interior.

The exterior of the building is of light gray stone worked in long flat pieces. The shape of the stone and the broad, old-fashioned pointing gives the building the appearance of being solidly built. The trimmings are of Indiana limestone, used in such a way that the heavy appearance of the stone work is relieved, and the effect is very pleasing. The windows are broad and high and in such numbers that the interior is very well lighted, the oak finish of the interior making this necessary.

Carved details are to be found only in a few shields bearing the arms of the University and the initials of the donors and the corbels supporting the hood over the doorway.

The building can be entered either from the north or south side. Terraces having stone balustrades and paved with marble tiles form broad platforms at the entrance. See figure 1.

From either entrance one passes through heavy doors into a high vestibule, wainscoted in panelled oak. Bulletin boards in the north vestibule are covered with notices of general interest to university men. From the south vestibule the Treasurer's window opens into the office.

The inner vestibule doors open directly into the reception hall. It is a room 60 by 30 feet, hand-

somely finished in oak, the tables, chairs and seats being of the same material. This is the general meet-

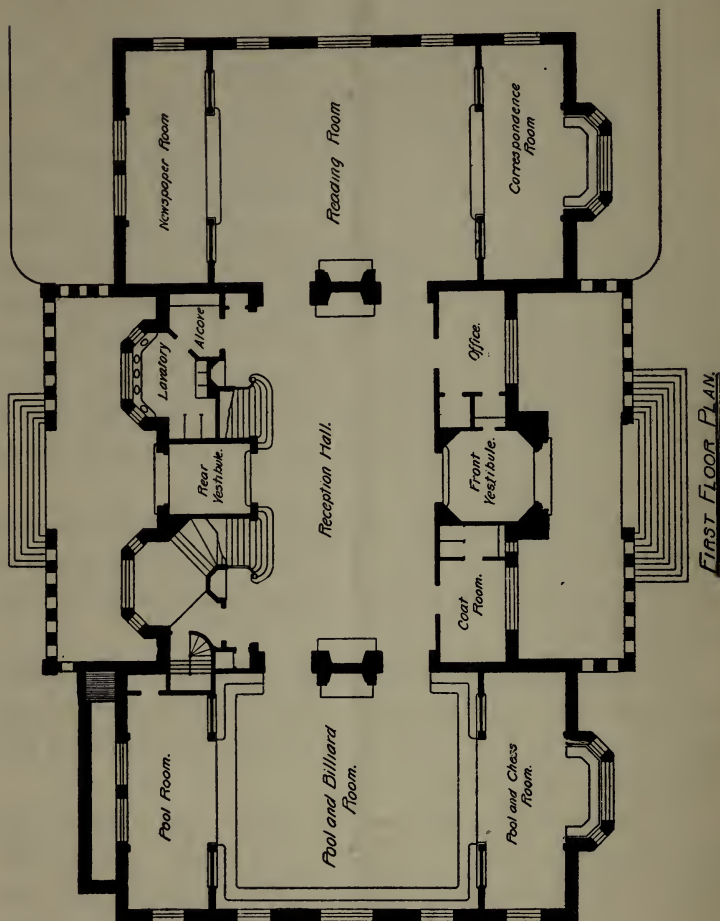


FIG. 1.

ing room, and between hours is filled with groups of students from all departments. As this is the first view one has of the interior, the beautiful furnishing,



the dim light, the bustling crowds of men, the views of the reading room and billiard room seen through the archways at the ends, impresses one with the thought that here the student is well taken care of.

At either end is a large open fireplace, and the deep leather-covered chairs put one entirely in sympathy with the motto over the lintel: "Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content."

The reading room is reached through high arched doorways on either side of the fireplace. This room is probably the most inviting one in the building. A large fireplace flanked by heavy oak pillars carrying the broad mantelpiece, the panelled oak seats in the corners, the easy chairs everywhere, the long lines of desks supplied with current periodicals, and newspapers from "home," the quiet restfulness, all tempt one to spend his quiet hours here. Current periodicals are to be found in the main room, newspapers on the raised portion at one end, and writing facilities at the other.

At the opposite end of the main hall is the billiard and pool room, having seven fine tables for billiards and pool and the raised portion of the room at one end being equipped with chess tables.

On the south front of this floor are the offices of the club and a hat and cloak room, while on the opposite side are the news stand, toilet and wash rooms.

Passing the news stand one is led directly to the basement. (See Fig. 2.) Almost at the foot of the stairs is the lunch room, the only after thought in the planning of the building. On the right is a barber shop and bowling alley, equipped with four alleys and

shuffle boards. At the opposite end is the bath and swimming pool. A marble pool having a maximum

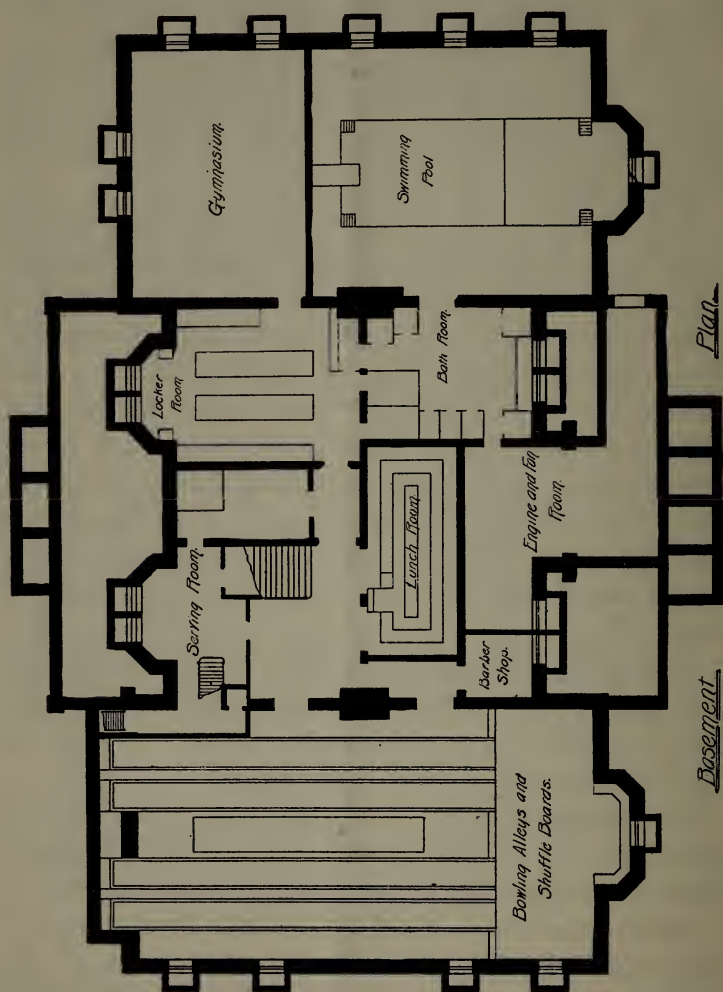


FIG. 2.

depth of ten feet and with a portion sloping from four to six feet takes up an end of the floor. A small, well-

equipped gymnasium and a locker room complete the equipment.

Going back to the reception hall, two broad stairways finished in oak, one on either side of the north entrance, lead to the floor above. The upper hall, which is about the same size as the one below, has its walls covered by excellent prints and photographs from the work of famous artists. (See Fig. 3.)

At the eastern end large doors open into the auditorium, a room large enough to hold six hundred people. It is a fine hall, finished entirely in quartered oak and has a high wainscot and heavily timbered roof. At the north end is a proscenium arch and stage, at the back of which is a large pipe organ. This hall is used for meetings, dances, and functions of all kinds during the week days and on Sundays two services are held under the direction of well-known preachers who are invited to conduct them.

At the western end of the hall is a large room used for a dining-room in connection with the main hall, and opening from this are rooms used by the Young Mens' Christian Association, the book room, the Secretary's room and the guest chamber.

The main room in front is called the trophy room. This is probably the most interesting portion of the building. Large cases contain the many trophies won by Pennsylvanians in athletic contests extending over many years. Handsome cups, banners, medals of all kinds, footballs with colors of the defeated teams and the scores, baseballs similarly adorned, fill the cases and are almost as interesting because of their beauty as from their association.

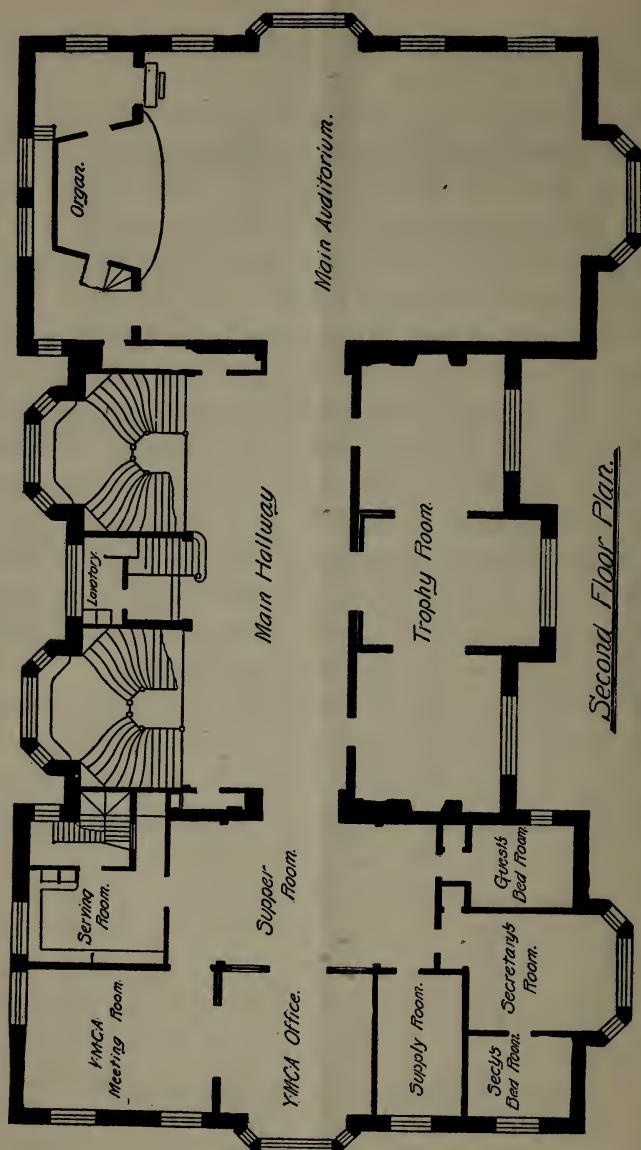


FIG. 3.



The third floor whose plan is shown in Fig. 4 is divided into numerous offices, society and committee rooms. The University's daily *Pennsylvanian* occupies one of them. A special room is set apart for the use of the Camera Club, and in connection with it, is a well appointed and convenient dark room. The music room, which occupies the southwest angle of the third story is somewhat unlike the rest of the building in architectural character. The room suggests the old inns and dwelling houses of the Tyrol, and the heavy oak furniture carries out this idea. It is furnished in pine, which has been slightly scorched by a painter's torch before applying a transparent finish. A sombre, yet interesting, effect is produced in this way. A piano is here provided, and its tones are to be heard almost any hour in the day reverberating along the corridors and stairways of the building. There are quite a number of society rooms here also which are regularly occupied by the medical, surgical and dental societies for their regular meetings.

Up to September 1, 1896, there had been spent \$153,247.66 on the building and the equipment of the hall and \$2,500 on its maintenance. From September 1, 1896, to September 1, 1897, \$1,190.66 additional was spent on equipment and \$5,000 on maintenance, so that the total cost of the building and its equipment was \$154,430.32.

It was early decided that the control of the club house should be left as much as possible in students' hands. Before the hall was completed, the Houston Club was organized and started with a membership

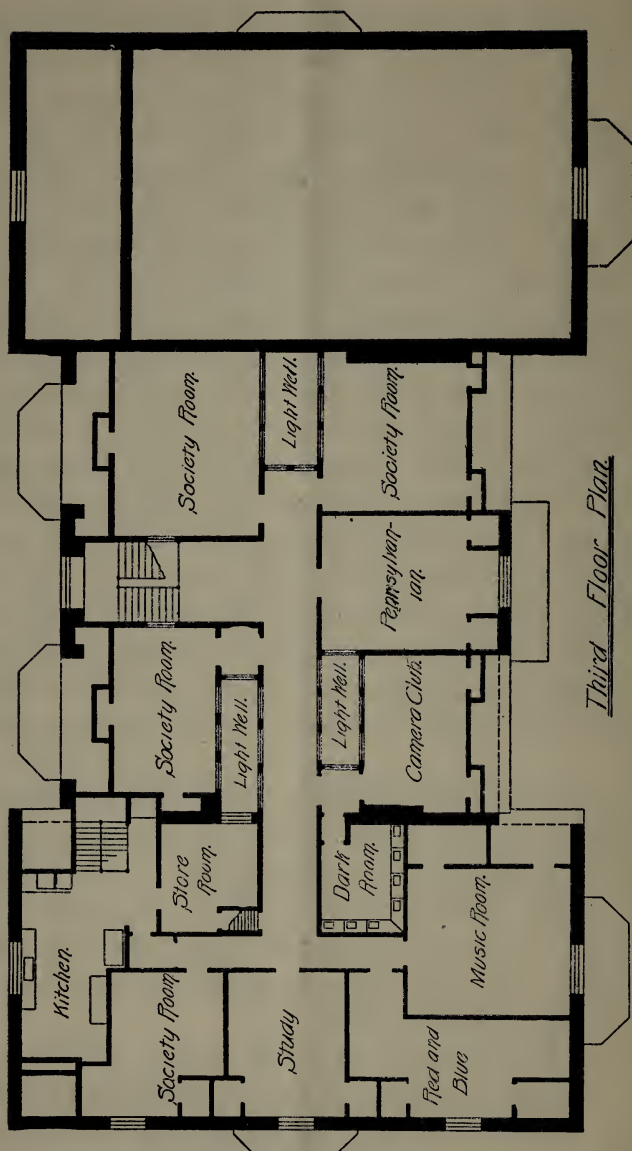


FIG. 4.

of three hundred, which grew rapidly until it reached the total of fourteen hundred and fifty active or student members, and three hundred associate or alumni members.

At its first meeting an organization was perfected which resulted in the adoption of a constitution that is practically in force to-day. The details of this organization may be of interest.

Any student, alumnus, or officer of the University may become a member of the club. Honorary members are nominated by the Provost or by the Board of Directors. Life members are such as may have paid \$20.00 dues. Active members must be registered students, paying dues of \$2.00 per year, and these only can vote or hold office. Associate Resident Members are officers, alumni, or ex-students who have been one year at the University and have left in good standing, who live within twenty-five miles of Philadelphia, and pay dues of \$2.00. Associate members are non-resident if they live over twenty-five miles from Philadelphia, and they then pay \$1.00 dues. Sustaining members are those who pay \$10.00 per year and have full use of bath and swimming pool, without additional expense, and they may also be classed as active members if eligible. Application for memberships are made on blanks which are posted for one week and then voted on by membership committee.

The Elective Club officers are a president, vice-president, and a recording secretary, elected for one year at the annual meeting of the club, the only restriction being that a member to be eligible to the

office of president must have been a member of the club for a year. The duties of these officers are those generally pertaining to the positions. The secretary-treasurer is an appointed officer and is selected by the board of directors.

The board of directors is composed of the deans of the various departments. This board is really the governing body of the club, but it has seldom found it necessary to interfere directly with the club management. The secretary-treasurer is the custodian of all the property and funds of the club.

The business of the club is handled by committees and sub-committees. These committees are elected, and a student in any department votes for the representatives of that department only on these committees.

The house committee contains two representatives from each department, college, philosophy, law, medical, dental and veterinary, elected as above, one member of the university faculty appointed by the board of directors, the secretary and the president; thus consisting of fifteen members.

Practically the entire control of the affairs of the club are in the hands of this committee, the financial side as well as the social.

The membership and the library committee each consists of one member from each department. The latter committee must approve all house rules relating to library.

Sub-committees of from three to five members are appointed by the house committee on pool and billiards, on bowling and on baths, and one member only



on each committee must be a member of the house committee.

It will thus be seen that only two active officers of the club are not controlled by the student body—one, the faculty member of the house committee, who is its present chairman and has held that position since the formation of the committee, and the other the secretary, who is the custodian.

The expenses of running the club are met partly from dues and partly from charges made for the use of billiard and pool tables, swimming pool, lockers, rent of rooms and Hall for various purposes, and from the return from the café and book room, etc. The following will give a fair idea of the cost of running the club house for the year from April 1, 1898, to April 1, 1899, and from 1900 to 1901.

INCOME.		
	'98-'99.	'00-'01.
Membership.....	\$3,789.00	\$3,785.30
Recreations .....	5,616.95	5,770.10
Other sources .....	2,368.13	1,305.46
News stand, profit .....	912.50	444.21
Café, profit .....	1,021.30	880.18
Book news, profit.....	137.85	725.00
Accounts collectable .....	564.68	
	<u>\$14,410.41</u>	<u>\$12,910.25</u>
OUTGO.		
	'98-'99.	'00-'01.
Wages .....	\$6,556.00	\$6,873.61
Postage .....	136.86	131.00
Incidentals.....	138.49	64.43
General expenses.....	6,570.71	6,814.71
	<u>\$13,403.06</u>	<u>\$13,883.75</u>

Showing a balance of about \$1,000 profit for 1898-'99, and a like deficit for 1900-'01.

The total amount of money handled each year is in the neighborhood of \$30,000.

Payment for all games, etc., are by tickets only, which are sold for twenty-five cents and one dollar apiece. These tickets are good for use any time during the current college year. The prices charged are as follows: Pool, 3 cents a cue; continuous pool, 21 cents per hour per person; billiards, 24 cents a game; use of swimming pool, 6 cents; swimming pool, with soap and towel, 9 cents; tub baths, 1 cents.

There are employed in the Club 28 employees, and the service is very good.

The membership of the Club has always been large. Beginning with 300 members on the date of the opening, the number soon reached 1,500 student members and 400 associate or alumni members.

	ENDING 1898.	SEPT., 1899, TO 1900.	1901.
Active .....	1,435	1,545	1,552
Associate .....	307	209 (resident)	310
“ .....		17 (non-resident)	17
Sustaining .....	29	15	15
Life .....	43	48	48
	<u>1,814</u>	<u>1,915</u>	<u>1,942</u>

The popularity of the club is evidenced by the daily attendance, which, for the college year 1897-'98, averaged 2,100. Not less than 250 members take their noon-day meal in the café, and the room is inadequate for the demands made upon it.

During the summer months and during the University recesses the swimming pool is in constant demand, and as many as 30 people are found in it at one time.

The Wednesday evening meetings of the Christian Association are well attended and many eminent speakers address them during the year. The interest in Bible study has so increased that every department has one or more classes meeting in the rooms set apart for that purpose.

The general well-being of the club is looked after by a Ladies' Committee, which advises as to the care of the building, the quality of the food used at the café, and generally take much interest in having the club made as comfortable and healthful as possible.

The effect of the club house on the student body has been very good. The elected officers of the organization have generally realized their responsibilities and have worked together for the interests of the club. The club does not differ much from any other well-frequented social club. It has had the effect of bringing together the men of different departments in a manner impossible before, and, together with the new dormitories, has had the effect of developing a strong university community of interest.

The question will be asked as to the effect on the student individually of such opportunities. It can be answered that it is in every way good. The number of cases where the club house has been used by students to the detriment of their class work is very small, although such cases do occur, but, I believe, with much less frequency than was the case prior to the establishment of the club, when the students were obliged to go elsewhere for their amusements.

The real value to the student is not in the formation of university spirit, nor in the eliminating of the



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lines of division between different departments, nor even the formation and strengthening of friendship, although all these are evident, but that he can live in a clear, wholesome atmosphere, and if he makes full use of the facilities at his hand, he can fill his leisure hours with pleasant things under conditions, which, for many, will never be met again.